



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2011

Contact: Lisa Richardson, 213-361-6980

Email: lrichardson@bos.lacounty.gov

or

Contact: Sharita Moon, 213-974-2222

Email: smoon@bos.lacounty.gov

Actor Roger Guenveur Smith Honored By Board of Supervisors

Actor and Leimert Park native Roger Guenveur Smith was honored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Tuesday, May 10 for his dramatic work that is often informed by his roots in African American Los Angeles.

Smith, who is also a writer and director, is performing in a new show opening May 19 at the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. "Juan and John," which Smith authored, tells the story of a brutal incident at a Giants-Dodgers game. This one, however, occurred in 1965.

"Juan and John" tells the story of the game in which Giants pitcher Juan Marichal, in a fit of anger, clubbed Dodgers catcher John Roseboro on the head with his bat, opening a big bloody gash in his head.

The show touches on themes of violence and race, as well as the Watts riots of the same year. It is also a tale of forgiveness -- Roseboro and Marichal became friends.

When Marichal failed for four years to be elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Roseboro made a public appeal that Marichal not be excluded due to the beating incident. When Marichal was inducted into the hall of fame, he thanked Roseboro in his acceptance speech.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who presented Smith to the Board for recognition, called Smith “a true actor-intellectual who has drawn on his roots in our community to inspire audiences worldwide.”

At the Board of Supervisors meeting, Smith evoked his Leimert Park childhood and called on the supervisors –who also sit on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board—to build a rail station in Leimert Park Village.

“Leimert Park Village, along with the Watts Towers, is one of those places that is a must-stop for anyone interested in culture in this city,” Smith said. “It should be a convenient and very accessible stop on our public transportation system,” he said.

Smith has appeared numerous films by the director Spike Lee, such as “Do the Right Thing” and “Malcolm X” as well as in such acclaimed works as “Eve’s Bayou” and Ridley Scott’s “American Gangster.”

Smith’s stage work “has ambitiously combined history, the politics of race and a fearless pursuit of universal truths, even when the truth hurts,” Ridley-Thomas said. His plays include, “Frederick Douglass Now,” “The Watts Towers Project,” and, with Mark Broyard, “Inside the Creole Mafia.”

Smith grew up in Leimert Park. His mother, Helen Guenveur, was a dentist, and his father, Sherman Smith was a Judge.

After Loyola High School, Smith attended Occidental College. This year Occidental awarded Smith the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition of his work.

Smith began graduate studies in History at Yale University, but also enrolled in the university’s storied school of drama.

Ridley-Thomas said Smith “has devoted his career to challenging us all to find the compassion and grace that lies beneath the often rough surface of our existence.”

###